

MNLARS Deficiency Funding Signed by Gov. Walz

A bill to provide deficiency funding for the MN Licensing and Registration System (MNLARS) was signed by Gov. Walz on Tuesday. [HF 861-Newman/Hansen](#) appropriates \$13.3 million for MNLARS, with \$5.5 million for phase 2 driver license development work that is being performed under a contract with the company FAST. The legislation also appropriates \$5.7 million for continued MNLARS development and \$2 million for Department of Public Safety (DPS) customer service improvements. The legislation requires ongoing quarterly reviews as well as an independent review of MNLARS. An additional \$100,000 is included to cover costs related to the independent review.

The bill was passed in an expedited way to avoid a potential loss of state contracts related to improvements being made to MNLARS. While this legislation does not include reimbursements for deputy registrars, the Senate Transportation Committee did hear [SF 621-Jasinski](#), a bill that allocates \$10 million for costs incurred by deputy registrars. Metro Cities staff testified in support of the bill and it was passed to the Finance Committee on a voice vote.

Bill to Repeal Bag Ordinance Preemption Law Heard in House

A bill to repeal a ban on local ordinances related to merchant bags received an informational hearing on Wednesday in the House Local Government Division. [HF 511-Elkins](#) would repeal a 2017 law that prohibited local governments, including cities, from passing ordinances related to merchant bags. Metro Cities joined the League of MN Cities in supporting this bill. Metro Cities policy supports local control and decision-making authority that allows municipalities to decide their own local ordinances.

The committee did not act on the bill, but the chair stated that the bill may be taken up at a later date.

Bill That Makes Changes to Interactive Meeting Attendance Passes House

[HF 281-Koegel](#), a bill that makes changes to open meeting laws related to interactive television, was passed by the House. Under current law, a member of government subject to open meeting law, including city governments, may attend meetings via interactive television if the location that the member is participating from is open to the public. The bill would allow members to be exempted from this requirement up to three times per year if they are serving in the military and are deployed or are on active duty or if they have been advised by a health care professional to not be in a public place. The bill was passed 125 to 1. The Senate companion, [SF 1246- Jasinski](#), has not received a hearing and has been referred to the Local Government Committee.

Metropolitan Council Sworn In; Chairs and Committees Named

Newly appointed members to the Metropolitan Council ([list here](#)) were formally sworn in at a Special Meeting of the Metropolitan Council on Wednesday afternoon. The Council then conducted a first overview meeting. Chairs to the Council's committees and committee memberships were also named this week ([list here](#)).

Bill to Remove Local Government Salary Cap Passes House Subcommittee

HF 703-Masin that repeals the local government salary cap, was heard and passed by the House Local Government Subcommittee on Wednesday. The bill had previously had an informational hearing at which Lakeville Councilmember Luke Hellier and the League of MN Cities provided oral testimony. Metro Cities supports this legislation and provided a letter of support to the committee. The bill's companion, SF 1651-Hall, has not yet been scheduled in the Senate.

Questions? Contact Patricia Nauman at 651-215-4002 or email patricia@metrocitiesmn.org.

Metro Mobility Expansion Bill Heard by Senate Committee

A bill to expand Metro Mobility to all communities within the transit taxing district was passed by the Senate Local Government Committee. In addition to expanding the Metro Mobility service area, [SF 695-Hall](#) will allow Met Council and the Department of Human Services to share certain data on individuals that receive special transportation services through Metro Mobility. The Metropolitan Council said that this would allow for some efficiencies in receiving more federal funds for qualified riders.

The bill was passed by voice vote to the Human Services Committee.

Legislative Auditor Releases Report on MnDOT Measures

The Office of the Legislative Auditor (OLA) released a report [MnDOT Measures of Financial Effectiveness](#). The Office of the Legislative Auditor (OLA) is a nonpartisan audit and evaluation office within the state's legislative branch. The OLA formally released the report to the Legislative Audit Commission on Wednesday.

According to the report, there is a lack of consistency in MnDOT's measures of the financial effectiveness of its decisions including a lack of systematic analysis of financial consequences of actions, and procedures to assess planned actions. The OLA presented several recommendations for the department to improve measures of cost-effectiveness. The Legislature requires MnDOT to identify and report on "efficiencies" and the OLA recommends the Legislature clarify its reporting requirements.

Metropolitan Council Livable Communities Funding Available for Cities

The Metropolitan Council has announced a variety of [funding opportunities](#) for metropolitan area communities. Metro area cities that participate in the Livable Communities Program can apply for \$21.4 million in grant funding:

- \$7.5 million for Livable Communities Demonstration Account (LDCA).
- \$5 million for Livable Communities Transit Oriented Development (TOD), including up to \$500,000 for Pre-Development.
- \$2.5 million for Local Housing Incentives Account (LHIA).
- \$5.9 million for Tax Base Revitalization Account (TRBA) including up to \$250,000 for environmental site investigation and \$500,000 for TRBA-SEED.

All applications must go through a city, town, county or development authority. The earliest applications are due on May 1. Visit the Metropolitan Council's [website](#) for more information.

Public Comment Period for Metropolitan Council Transportation Plan Amendment

The Metropolitan Council is taking public comment on an amendment proposed to the region's Transportation Policy Plan (TPP). The amendment would extend the METRO GOLD Line alignment to a new station in Woodbury and add lanes along I-94 in Northwest Hennepin County from Dayton Parkway to Minnesota Highway 101. A public hearing is scheduled for Tuesday, April 2nd, at 4:00 pm at the Metropolitan Council, 390 North Robert Street, St Paul.

The public comment period closes at 5:00 pm on April 12th. To comment on the TPP you can:

- Attend the public hearing
- Write to Public Information at 390 Robert St. North, St. Paul, MN
- Email Public Information at public.info@metc.state.mn.us
- Record a comment on the Public Comment Line at 651.602.1500

Two MIF Policy Bills Heard

Two bills impacting policy around the Minnesota Investment Fund (MIF) were heard in House and Senate committees this week.

[HF 1507](#) – Stephenson would allow a MIF grant of up to \$2 million for projects that have at least \$25 million in capital investment and 150 new employees. The bill also adds metro eligibility to DEED's Job Training Grant Program as well as calling for a \$3 million appropriation in both FY 2020 and FY2021. The definition of a new job would be defined as one with a manufacturing or technology employer. Grant awards could be made up to \$400,000 on a project. Stature currently caps MIF grants at \$1 million. The Senate companion, [SF 1579](#) – Hoffman, has not been scheduled for a hearing.

A bill extending the one-time exemption from restrictive use of local MIF revolving loan fund balances, authorized in 2017, to another one-year period, was approved by the Senate Jobs committee on March 6. [SF 1815](#) – Pratt, allows a city to transfer 20 percent of the balance of that money to the state general fund before June 30, 2020. Any local entity that does so may then use the remaining 80 percent of the uncommitted money as a general purpose aid for any lawful expenditure. DEED shared a letter indicating the use and impact of the 2017 authorization. The agency showed 49 local government units submitted \$1.6 million to DEED which released \$6.5 million in revolving loan funds for other purposes. The House companion, [HF 1781](#) – Mahoney, has not been scheduled for a hearing.

Contact Charlie Vander Aarde at 651-215-4001 or charlie@metrocitiesmn.org with any questions.

Bill to Establish New Housing Commission Passes

A proposal for the legislature to establish a new Legislative Commission on Housing Affordability was heard in the Senate housing policy committee on March 7. The legislation is supported by the builders' association.

Metro Cities and the League of Minnesota Cities worked with [SF 1294](#) author Senator Rich Draheim on language to include more types of housing beyond newly built owner-occupied single family housing in the legislation. Metro Cities supports housing that is affordable and appropriate for people at all stages of life, recognizing a variety of housing opportunities are important to the economic and social well-being of individual communities and the region.

An amendment, adopted by the committee, lists duties for the commission, including: defining housing affordability, studying preservation and rehabilitation of existing owner-occupied and rental housing, regulations impacting housing affordability, market forces impacting housing affordability including labor and construction materials, policies to reduce the homeownership equity gap and barriers to homeownership. The commission is also charged with recommending rulemaking and legislative proposals impacting personal housing affordability and access to homeownership.

The bill passed the committee and was referred to the Senate Rules committee. The House companion, [HF 1208](#) – Carlson, A. has not been scheduled for a hearing.

Contact Charlie Vander Aarde at 651-215-4001 or charlie@metrocitiesmn.org with any questions.

City Contractor RFQ Bill Fails in Senate Hearing

Legislation that would require cities to issue annual or biennial requests for qualifications for contractors who wish to provide work for cities was debated in the Senate Local Government committee on March 5. An adopted amendment to [SF 998](#) – Koran moved the annual requirement to an every two-year requirement. City officials from Corcoran and St. Louis Park testified with concerns on the bill, including information on how cities currently work with contractors (engineers, planners, attorneys) to protect city assets and meet city goals.

Telecom advocates for the change testified how the bill would provide transparency, while city officials explained how transparency is provided under current practices, with greater efficiency for all parties involved – cities, contractors and the fee-paying applicants. Several senators noted the impact on cities, citing the additional requirements placed on city staff.

The bill failed on a split committee vote. The House companion, [HF 823](#) – Nelson, has not been scheduled for a hearing.

Contact Charlie Vander Aarde at 651-215-4001 or charlie@metrocitiesmn.org with any questions.

Save the Date for the Metro Cities Annual Meeting!

Mark your calendars and save the date for the Metro Cities Annual Meeting! This year's event will be held on **Wednesday, April 24th** at the Como Park Zoo and Conservatory in the Bullard Rainforest Auditorium. We're pleased to announce that this year's speakers are Briana Bierschbach of MPR News and Peter Callaghan of MinnPost. The evening will start with a social hour, followed by our guest speakers, and will wrap up with a brief business meeting to elect members and officers to the Board of Directors.

All member city staff and elected officials are welcome and encouraged to attend. There is no cost, but we do ask that you RSVP by **April 8th** if you plan to attend.

For questions or to RSVP, contact Kimberly at 651-215-4000 or kimberly@metrocitiesmn.org.

Bills of Note

[HF 1943](#), Kresha: Bill allocates state general sales tax revenue from motor vehicle repair and replacement parts sales exclusively to fund state and local roads and appropriates money for the corridors of commerce program.

[HF 1961](#), Lippert: Bill appropriates money from the general fund to the commissioner of human services for community action grants.

[HF 1970](#), Youakim: Bill allows cities to impose a local sales tax if certain conditions are met.

[HF 1981](#), Noor: Bill appropriates money to the commissioner of health for local public health grants.

[HF 1995](#), Bernardy: Bill authorizes vehicle platooning systems.

[HF 1996](#), Elkins: Bill sets standards for regulating autonomous vehicle testing and requires a report.

[HF 2011](#), Wagenius: Bill modifies the planning requirements for watershed management organizations.

[HF 2015](#), Lislegard: Bill establishes response program to support the control of emerald ash borer. Bill establishes a state matching grant of up to 75% of costs associated with community responses to emerald ash borer.

[HF 2017](#), Howard: Bill makes changes to the manufactured home park relocation trust fund.

[HF 2031](#), Hertaus: Bill modifies the city aid program.

[HF 2063](#), Masin: Bill authorizes the Metropolitan Council to issue administrative citations for transit fare evasion and impose civil fines.

[HF 2066](#), Runbeck: Bill authorizes local units of government to conduct criminal background checks under certain circumstances.

[HF 2081](#), Hansen: Bill appropriates \$10 million for reimbursements to deputy registrars for losses incurred due to MNLARS.

[HF 2082](#), Hansen: Bill appropriates \$10 million for deputy registrar reimbursements for losses incurred due to MNLARS. Includes requirements for reimbursement.

[HF 2090](#), Davids: Bill provides a construction exemption for cities.

[HF 2105](#), Lee: Bill appropriates money for an outdoor performance venue at Upper Harbor Terminal in Minneapolis.

[HF 2118](#), Koegel: Bill appropriates money for the National Sports Center in Blaine.

[HF 2121](#), Brand: Bill appropriates \$100,000,000 to the local road improvement fund program.

[HF 2132](#), Lee/ [SF 2176](#), Champion: Bill appropriates money for trail connections and Mississippi River access in Minneapolis.

[HF 2148](#), Acomb/[SF 2117](#), Anderson: Bill provides a grant to the city of Minnetonka from the Minnesota Investment Fund for a high-risk, high-return job retention initiative.

[HF 2163](#), Lillie: Bill appropriates \$10,000,000 from the bond proceeds fund to the Metropolitan Council for regional park and open-space land acquisition and improvements by local governments.

[HF 2164](#), Bierman: Bill appropriates money for improvements to the Ames Arena in Lakeville.

[HF 2170](#), Bernardy: Bill appropriates funds for the active transportation program.

[HF 2174](#), Wolgamott: Bill redistributes the five percent highway user tax distribution fund set-aside to the small cities road account and a large cities road account.

[HF 2189](#), Theis/ [SF 2217](#), Koran: Bill relates to municipal contracting, increasing the transparency for certain bids.

[HF 2192](#), Youakim: Bill allows state funds to be used for light rail operating and capital maintenance costs for the SWLRT Project.

[HF 2201](#), Her: Bill appropriates money for a grant to the city of St. Paul to create college savings accounts at birth.

[SF 1939](#), Chamberlain: Bill modifies the city aid formula.

[SF 1950](#), Chamberlain/ [HF 2066](#), Runbeck: Bill authorizes local units of government to conduct criminal background checks for individuals seeking a license for specific circumstances, including applicants for providing massage services.

[SF 1961](#), Lang: Bill appropriates money to the Housing Finance Agency for grants to local housing trust funds.

[SF 1975](#), Miller: Bill appropriates money for development of the Twin Cities-Milwaukee-Chicago (TCMC) second train.

[SF 1977](#), Rarick: Bill moves Sunday liquor store hours up an hour.

[SF 1980](#), Dibble: Bill provides for additional financing in an amount of \$92 million for metropolitan area transit and paratransit capital expenditures.

[SF 1981](#), Hoffman: Bill authorizes individuals under the age of 18 to vote at a primary election.

[SF 2001](#), Rosen: Bill makes a municipal liquor stores accounting adjustment. The bill requires city councils to hold a public hearing about continuing to operate a municipal liquor store if the liquor store has shown a net loss. The bill clarifies that this is only if the store has shown a net loss without regard to costs related to pension obligations of store employees.

[SF 2007](#), Utke: Bill modifies the local match requirements for redevelopment grants and appropriates money for the redevelopment program.

[SF 2020](#), Senjem: Bill requires the Department of Transportation to establish a micro transit pilot program in coordination with the Metropolitan Council, the University of Minnesota Center for Transportation Services, local government entities and private business organizations.

[SF 2021](#), Senjem: Bill appropriates money from the bond proceeds fund to the Public Facilities Authority for clean water, including funds for grants to eligible municipalities.

[SF 2025](#), Franzen: Bill authorizes cities to reduce speed limits in residential areas.

[SF 2049](#), Jensen: Bill appropriates money for upgrade of Lyman Boulevard in Chanhassen.

[SF 2050](#), Jensen: Bill appropriates money for upgrade of Lyman Boulevard in Chanhassen.

[SF 2052](#), Howe: Bill provides a construction exemption for certain public safety owned and operated by a local government.

[SF 2062](#), Dziejczak: Bill makes changes to the public notification procedure related to an unauthorized acquisition of government data.

[SF 2063](#), Dziejczak: Bill makes changes to the definition of data security breach.

[SF 2076](#), Latz: Bill modifies tax increment financing rules for Hopkins.

[SF 2085](#), Osmek/[HF 2214](#), Tabke: Bill eliminates the sunset on metropolitan area allocation of motor vehicle sales tax revenue to replacement service providers.

[SF 2087](#), Anderson, P.: Bill extends motor vehicle lease sales tax revenue allocation to Hennepin and Ramsey County.

[SF 2098](#), Little: Bill appropriates money for the Minnesota investment fund, job creation fund, and redevelopment program.

[SF 2119](#), Champion: Bill appropriates money for an outdoor performance venue at the Upper Harbor Terminal in Minneapolis.

[SF 2136](#), Chamberlain: Bill requires consultation with and approval by affected municipalities before approval or implementation of a change in services provided by an ambulance service.

[SF 2144](#), Carlson: Bill appropriates \$13,905,000 from the general fund to the metropolitan landfill contingency action trust account.

[SF 2154](#), Dibble: Bill allows cities of the first class to establish city speed limits.

[SF 2203](#), Mathews: Bill would create an optional 20 cent tax on gasoline.

[SF 2204](#), Mathews: Bill lowers the tax on gasoline and allocates funds for transportation from the general fund.

[SF 2217](#), Koran: Bill prohibits conflicts of interest in municipal contracting.

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